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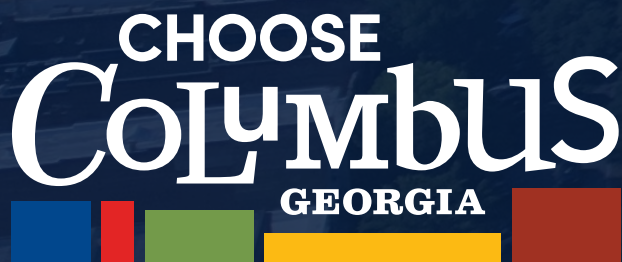
COLUMBUS OFFERS
AMAZING OPPORTUNITIES
IN **FOOD & BEVERAGE**
PROCESSING



CHOOSE
CoLumbus
GEORGIA

We do amazing.

Columbus, Georgia: Where Coca-Cola Was Born & Food & Beverage Processing Companies Thrive



We do amazing.



Columbus is an ideal city for food and beverage processing thanks to its abundant water supply, proximity to agriculture, ready workforce, robust infrastructure, and unbeatable location advantages.

“We’re very fortunate to be located on the Chattahoochee River, where we draw water from Lake Oliver,” said Steve Davis, President of Columbus Water Works (CWW). “The city is known for beverage manufacturing, which includes the production of soft drinks, fruit juices, energy drinks, and bottled water. Coca-Cola was founded here, so we have a history of beverage manufacturing that lasts nearly 150 years.”



COLUMBUS, GEORGIA PROVIDES FOOD & BEVERAGE COMPANIES WITH A COMPETITIVE ADVANTAGE



With fierce competition in the food and beverage industry, Columbus offers companies the advantages they need to grow: a fresh and abundant water supply, available sites and buildings, an affordable business climate, a manufacturing workforce, a diverse energy supply, and access to major markets via road, rail, and air.


Abundant Water & Power Supply

Columbus Water Works (CWW), the region's municipally-owned water and wastewater facility, has won multiple [awards for excellence](#)—fundamental to the food and beverage industry since the slightest imbalance in natural minerals or chlorine can impact the flavor, aroma, texture, shelf life, and appearance of products.

This almost unlimited water supply feeds several nearby hydroelectric dams, which, according to Doug Jenkins, Regional VP of [Georgia Power Company](#), are but one component of an ever-diversifying energy infrastructure. “East of the city, we have many solar facilities,” he explained. “We also have a large coal-fired energy plant, and soon, we’ll be bringing a large nuclear power plant to the Augusta area.” He added that Columbus’s power distribution system is exceptionally reliable and efficient.

Low Utility Rates

Thanks to the abundance of water and excellent management, [Columbus Water Works](#) offers the best rates in the Southeastern United States. [Georgia Power](#) is the largest subsidiary of [Southern Company](#), one of the nation’s largest generators of electricity. The company is an investor-owned, tax-paying utility serving 2.3 million customers in 155 of the 159 counties in Georgia. In addition to providing great service, Georgia Power’s rates remain well below the national average. [According to Electricity Local](#), Columbus’s average Industrial electricity rate is 4.35% less than the Georgia average and 14.24% less than the national average rate.



Columbus businesses' and residents' natural gas is provided by [Liberty](#) – a regulated water, wastewater, natural gas, and electric utility company providing local utility management, service, and support to small and mid-sized communities across the United States.

Ready Workforce

Food processing is Georgia's top manufacturing sector, so its universities and agribusiness research organizations are key ingredients in this industry's ecosystem, which naturally benefits Columbus.

The University of Georgia has a program in [Food Science and Technology](#) that includes a graduate program, and its [Food Product Innovation Center](#) at the University of Georgia's Griffin Campus, about 80 miles away from Columbus, specializes in helping producers and entrepreneurs innovate and perfect new products. [Georgia Tech's Georgia Manufacturing Extension Partnership \(GaMEP\)](#) offers training education and certifications in food manufacturing. Meanwhile, Columbus Tech offers degrees in both [Culinary Arts](#) and [Manufacturing](#).



250,000+ WORKERS

IN BI-CITY LABOR SHED

6,300+ BUSINESSES

IN GREATER COLUMBUS

APPROXIMATELY 2,500

ACTIVE DUTY SOLDIERS EXIT THE MILITARY
FROM FORT MOORE EACH YEAR

APPROXIMATELY 700

STAY IN COLUMBUS

OVER 43% INCREASE

IN # OF RESIDENTS WITH BACHELOR'S
DEGREE OR HIGHER SINCE 2000

Available Sites

Columbus also has plenty of available land, including shovel-ready sites and available buildings in its industrial parks.

One of the most ideal sites for food and beverage manufacturing and distribution is Muscogee Technology Park, which offers access to U.S. Highway 80 & I-185—sites for sale or lease range from 7 to 138 acres. There are also existing buildings with loading docs, warehouses, storage, office space, and truck courts. All utilities are in place, and great incentives are available.



Location Advantages

Beyond water and power, Columbus offers a multitude of amazing location advantages that fuel its food and beverage processing plants. Georgia is the superhub of the southeast, and Columbus is the gateway to the southeastern states – just 107 miles from Atlanta, approximately 140 miles from Birmingham and 220 miles from Chattanooga.

For transportation by rail, Norfolk Southern and CSX run through Columbus, making it easier to transport raw materials to local food and beverage manufacturing companies.

Columbus Airport (CSG) and Hartsfield–Jackson Atlanta International Airport make reaching 80% of the U.S. market within a 2-hour flight possible. CSG serves the Columbus, GA, and Fort Moore area and offers direct flights to Atlanta. Because it's a mid-sized airport with fewer passengers, TSA lines are short and move quickly, making flying from Columbus convenient and efficient. CSG accommodates over 100,000 passengers annually through Delta Airlines, as well as itinerant business aircraft and occasional military flights.

The climate-controlled Perishables Center at Hartsfield–Jackson Atlanta International Airport features on-site distribution and transport capabilities, USDA inspection services, and a fumigation chamber.



OUR FOOD AND BEVERAGE INDUSTRY IS GROWING

In the past ten years, 293 food processing companies have opened or expanded operations in Georgia, investing more than \$4.75 billion. Georgia's food processing industry has now outgrown the rest of the nation in gross state product, exports, and jobs. (Columbus CEO 6/29/22)

According to Soft Drinks Global Market Report 2023, The global soft drinks market is expected to grow from \$437.78 billion in 2022 to \$464.88 billion in 2023 at a compound annual growth rate (CAGR) of 6.2%.

COLUMBUS IS AN AMAZING CITY FOR FOOD PROCESSING

Located near southeast agricultural hubs and rail connectivity, Columbus is ideal for food manufacturing, especially for products with heavy water requirements. Among the city's most famous food manufacturers is Hostess, a leading sweet snacks company that bakes, markets, and distributes products throughout North America. Its product line includes Hostess Donettes, Twinkies, CupCakes, Ding Dongs, and Zingers. Its Columbus plant has 550 employees.

Hostess Snack Cakes

"Columbus is rooted in manufacturing," said Beaux Williamson, Hostess' Director of Bakery Operations. "On top of the millions invested into the company, we have a growing demand for our product, which is where the investment opportunities come in." Williamson is confident that Columbus has been the ideal location for Hostess to expand. "We have made a lot of capital investment," he said. "Here in Columbus, you know the workforce will rise to the challenge."

Employees echo this sentiment with Rayuna Grant, Production Supervisor, stating, "There are great career opportunities here, I love it here."

One of the regional assets Hostess has leveraged is the Georgia Quick Start program. This program provides them with customized workforce training assistance to ensure the plant can meet ever-growing demand. In addition, Hostess leverages its relationship with the Greater Columbus Georgia

Chamber of Commerce and local community colleges. "Columbus has a great community college program, rich with aspiring students who are looking to apply their trade to manufacturing facilities and get their career started in a hurry," said Williamson.

From community leadership to aspiring talent, support for the food and beverage industry exists throughout the community. "There is a spirit of comradery here with the Chamber, city, and everyone working together to help businesses like Hostess start or expand," said Jerald Mitchell, Chamber CEO. "Our organization, the Chamber and Development Authority, provides ombudsmanship services. Permitting gets expedited, and we have seen all types of permits issued within 45 days. We work with partners to make it happen and have the ready sites and buildings in place to make the process of expanding in Columbus easy."

FOOD COMPANIES ARE GROWING REGIONALLY

Chairmans Foods

Chairmans Foods is a multi-plant, gold-star-rated, USDA manufacturer of frozen and refrigerated meals, salads, side dishes, and desserts for delis, grocers, and chain restaurants. Its Columbus facility is 70,000 square feet and employs over 100 people.

Ala Trade Foods

Ala Trade Foods is an employee-owned and operated company. Its chicken processing plant is just across the river in Phenix City and has 640 workers. Ala Trade Foods processes 400 million pounds of chicken every year.



COLUMBUS HAS AN AMAZING SOFT DRINK LEGACY

Columbus boasts a long history of success in the beverage industry. Some people say the industry started in Columbus, as celebrated by the [Soft Drink Heritage Trail](#).

BEVERAGE COMPANIES FOUNDED IN COLUMBUS, GEORGIA

Coca-Cola

Coca-Cola, one of the most recognizable brands ever created, was started in Columbus, Georgia. The company has a value of \$73.1 billion and over 500 brand names under its umbrella, selling 1.8 billion servings of its beverages across 200 countries daily. Its secret formula was developed by chemist John Stith Pemberton, who lived on Seventh Street. [Coca-Cola Bottling Company UNITED](#) continues to play a significant role in the company's operations, distributing over 750 beverage products under exclusive franchise agreements.

Columbus Coca-Cola has always supported civic and charitable ordinations in the community. [The Coca-Cola Space Science Center](#) is a division of Columbus State University and an amazing place to visit.

RC Cola International

[RC Cola](#), an age-old rival of Coca-Cola, was founded in Columbus in 1905. Its headquarters, with over 200 employees, remains there. Today, RC Cola is a multi-award-winning company with [nine soda brands](#) enjoyed worldwide. RC was the first company to sell soda in aluminum cans, the creator of the first popular diet cola, the first company to sell 16-ounce sodas, and they also held the first national consumer taste tests for soda.

River City Beverages

[River City Beverages](#) was founded in Columbus in 2008. It creates delicious formulas for every imaginable type of drink— sodas, sports hydration drinks, energy drinks, flavored waters, lemonade, flavored teas, low or no-calorie beverages, and much more. They are also experts in product packaging with experience in the beverage development and production industry.

COMPANIES BOTTLING & DISTRIBUTING BEVERAGES FROM COLUMBUS, GEORGIA

Buffalo Blue Rock Pepsi

Buffalo Blue Rock Pepsi is a bottling company and distributor delivering refreshments since 1901. With the broadest non-alcoholic beverage portfolio in the industry, they carry over 1000 beverage SKUs with brands that include Pepsi, Mountain Dew, 7up, A&W, Sunkist, Propel, Lipton, Starbucks, Dole, Ocean Spray, Twister, and more. They supply more than 15,000 retailers in the area - primarily micro markets and provide drinks for vending machines, offices, restaurants, and fountain drink concessions. Their Columbus facility employs 150 people.

BEVERAGE MANUFACTURING IN COLUMBUS, GEORGIA

Refresco

In 2019, Refresco, a leading developer and manufacturer of soft drink concentrates for bottlers in more than 70 countries, acquired the Columbus company Cott Beverages, LLC in Columbus. Hans Roelofs, Refresco CEO, said this new center "... adds extensive innovation capabilities and skills, creating a global center of excellence for beverage concentrate manufacturing."

Refresco's products include carbonated beverages, juice, bottled water, sports drinks, energy drinks, ready-to-drink teas, mixers, and alcoholic beverages. The company plans continued investments to expand the workforce by over 50% over the next two years.

B&B Beverage

B & B Beverage Company serves over 250,000 customers, including Fort Moore, the fifth-largest military base in the United States. Their portfolio of beverages includes more than 250 premium, domestic, craft, and import beer, wine, and high-end liquor products and 30 non-alcohol and bottled-water products.

Cera Products

Forty years ago, Cera Products' founder, Charlene Riinkonen, developed a scientific line of rehydration formulas in Columbus. Millions of people, including athletes and military troops, add these all-natural, clean electrolyte powders to water for health and endurance.

Califormulations

Califormulations offers complete end-to-end beverage formulations from complementary assets across the U.S. They are poised to handle everything from consumer insights to prototyping, packaging, bottling, scale-up, and more. Their new concept is designed for speed, ease, and agility because they provide complete project management from a single source.

BUSINESSES OF ALL SIZES AND TYPES THRIVE

Adjacent to I-185 and approximately 1.5 hours from Atlanta, Columbus is home to major corporations beyond the Food & Beverage industry. These include Aflac, Synovus Financial Corporation, TSYS (Total System Services), Pratt & Whitney Aerospace, Char-Broil, Piedmont Columbus Regional Healthcare and Kia Motors Manufacturing. Columbus also has many mid-sized companies, small businesses, and innovative startups spanning various sectors.

“Georgia has been the top state to do business in for ten years in a row, and Columbus is pro-business,” said Heath Schondelmayer, Market President of Columbus Synovus. “Many businesses have started here and gone public to become Fortune 500 companies.”

The Greater Columbus Chamber of Commerce works collaboratively with the state of Georgia and other economic development partners to provide businesses with a broad range of tax and financial incentives. Columbus is known for this collaborative approach and fast speed-to-market opportunities.

“Columbus has one of the best public/private partnerships I have ever seen,” said The Cotton Companies Founder and CEO Christopher Woodruff. “I live in Columbus because I like to get things done.”

Knowing a diverse business ecosystem is best for the community, Columbus offers programs that substantially help prospective and newly-minted entrepreneurs.

Those programs include entrepreneurial education programs, business incubators, and mentoring. Columbus has several organizations designed to support and encourage startups in innovative ways. One of its most notable organizations is StartUp Columbus, which helps make office space and human, financial, and professional resources available. Thanks to its partnership with Co.StartersCo, future business owners can take an entrepreneurship course and compete in a business pitch competition, which provides \$40K in funding to all its winners.

“We have been going for five years and have supported hundreds of entrepreneurs,” said StartUp Columbus Executive Director Ben McMinn. “So far, 140 entrepreneurs have graduated through our program, and forty-four businesses have incubated out of here.”

Columbus is also home to Fort Moore (formerly Fort Benning), one of the top military installations in the world. This proximity gives the community a decided workforce advantage. In addition to supporting



more than 120,000 active-duty military, family members, reserve component soldiers, retirees, and civilian employees on a daily basis, the installation is home to 12,900 Permanent active-duty military members and their families. Approximately 2,500 active duty soldiers exit the military from Fort Moore each year, and approximately 700 of them stay in Columbus.

“Their presence is an enormous asset to employers,” said retired Brigadier General Andrew Hilmes. “Soldiers are vetted, they have security clearances, they’re trustworthy and reliable, and they are inculcated in military values from day one. Employers who hire them are getting trained, mature soldiers with some interesting experiences under their belts.”

He went on to explain that Fort Moore offers The Career Skills Program, which allows transitioning service members to participate in Employment Skills Training (EST), on-the-job training (OJT), Pre-Apprenticeships, and Internships. According to Hilmes, most soldiers who leave the military through Fort Moore take advantage of that program.

Adding to and supporting the local workforce in a wide variety of fields are Columbus State University, Columbus Technical College, Mercer Medical School, Morehouse Medical School, Georgia Military College, Embry-Riddle Aeronautical University, and Strayer University also have Columbus Campuses. Meanwhile, Auburn University, Georgia Institute of Technology, and Georgia State University are just a short drive away.

LIFESTYLE: COLUMBUS OFFERS AN AMAZING LIFESTYLE



Rising from the east bank of the Chattahoochee River, this unique city of just over 202,000 people offers a unique mixture of big-city amenities and hometown Southern charm.

Fondly described as “under the radar and over the top,” Columbus is full of surprises. Home to the world’s most extensive urban whitewater rafting course and bordered by a 15-mile scenic river walk, it’s an extraordinary place where nature’s beauty weaves itself into the urban tapestry in unexpected ways. There are blocks of postcard-perfect 19th-century architecture, massive oak trees, public fountains, and eclectic art installations. The pleasantly walkable downtown and adjacent neighborhoods boast delightful stores, restaurants, pubs, and coffee shops – many of which offer pet-friendly outdoor seating and fast, free Wi-Fi. The friendliness is palpable, and so is the professional energy. Two hundred fifty thousand people work in the greater Columbus region, many coming from 20 surrounding counties in both Georgia and Alabama. More than half of them are ages 25-44.

Though the cost of living is about 12% below the national average, Columbus offers cultural, lifestyle, and recreational amenities on par with larger cities.

In addition to the whitewater rapids course, river walk, and idyllic downtown, the city has an extensive urban trail system, nine historic districts, and three farmers’ markets. It’s also home to the [National Civil War Naval Museum](#), [The National Infantry Museum](#) and [American Soldier Center](#), and [The Coca-Cola Space Science Center](#), which features an immersive theater and an observatory. [The Columbus Museum](#) offers American artwork and regional history exhibits. Concert and Theatergoers can see their favorite entertainment in the opulent [RiverCenter for the Performing Arts](#) or the [Columbus Civic Center](#), which also hosts basketball, cheerleading, hockey, figure skating, and Esports events. Another acclaimed sports facility is [Historic Golden Park](#), Official Home to [Columbus Chatt-A-Hoots](#), Sunbelt Baseball League. The city also boasts the nationally renowned [South Commons Complex](#), Home to the 1996 Olympic Women’s Fastpitch Softball Competition and the 2019 USA Softball International Cup. [Bull Creek Golf Course](#), [Cooper Creek Tennis Center](#), and [Columbus Aquatic Center](#) add to the city’s recreational offerings.

“This town has great things to offer in every interest area, arts, music, outdoor adventure, it’s all here, and it’s all easy to get to. You’re never more than 10-15 minutes from anything and everything,” said President and Chief Officer, Pace Halter of WC Bradley Real Estate.



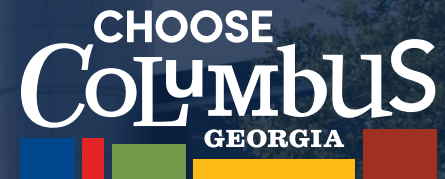
“We’re uniquely positioned,” said Columbus Mayor Skip Henderson. “We get people coming in all the time who have either not been to Columbus in a long time, or who have never been to Columbus, and they usually start the conversation with ‘I had no idea.’”



Be Part Of Something Amazing

Through the years, Columbus has had the recipe for success when it comes to quenching the thirst, pleasing the palates, and satisfying the appetites of people around the world. Whether you're a mammoth player in the industry or a small batch business that's ready to go big, this amazing city offers a feast of opportunities.

The Greater Columbus Georgia Chamber of Commerce Economic Development is dedicated to offering support and resources for businesses looking to Choose Columbus. We can put together a relocation package for your company. Contact us today for information and assistance.



We do amazing.

**Greater Columbus Georgia Chamber
of Commerce Economic Development**

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